

Princess's Spirit Life Ideas #1:

The Dreamers' Guide to Life

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For more Princess's Spirit Ideas

There are more fiction and non-fiction titles by TaraElla relating to the Princess's Spirit concept.

TaraElla also maintains a blog and (upcoming) show inspired by the Princess's Spirit, called The TaraElla Show.

Visit **www.taraella.com** to find out more.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Why Dreamers Build the World

This is a book by a dreamer, for dreamers, and all about the dreamers' perspective on life.

Dreamers are unrealistic about life, they say. Dreams are a waste of time, they say. And dreaming about better things is also selfish, they say. But all this is far from the truth, in fact. Whilst some people's dreams consist of nothing more than being the richest person on Earth, which is clearly unrealistic and can be said to be selfish, most dreamers have a much more useful vision. Racial equality, gender equality, and the like are all dreams, and once upon a time were generally thought to be unrealistic too. A world without dreamers would be permanently stuck in something like the middle ages, in fact. I don't know about you, but I clearly don't want to live there, and I'm grateful to all those dreamers who had come before me, who had changed things for the better.

You can now see why this book is part of the Princess's Spirit Life Ideas Series, and is the first and most important book of the series too. Without a dreamer's perspective, it is impossible to overcome the multiple barriers to thoroughly implement the agenda of the Princess's Spirit. For example, most people living in the middle ages wouldn't even know how a society without slaves, or a society with gender equality would look like. Only dreamers are able to see how society can operate very differently, and much better. Moreover, multiple 'realities' in life mean that each social change is a long and hard fight, and a dreamer's perspective, never giving in to so-called 'realities', is needed to win the battle. In the original Princess's Spirit novel, Angelle and her team are all dreamers, and they refuse to bow down to the barriers to their vision.

And whilst dreams of social change are what build our world up to be a better place,

dreaming about a better life for oneself isn't necessarily selfish either. Firstly, to truly embrace the dreamer's perspective, one would have to do so in every aspect of life. Therefore, it is difficult to not have dreams for your personal life too, if you are a true dreamer. From another perspective, those who shut out dreaming in their personal lives often also stop dreaming about social change. Therefore, we should encourage dreaming big in both personal and social endeavours. Secondly, those who dream of social change also often, in association, dream of getting themselves into positions where they can affect this change. In the original Princess's Spirit novel, Angelle is equally driven to campaign for social change itself as well as to be a leading member of her society, where she can effect change, and the two goals are intrinsically linked. Young people around the world dream of becoming Presidents and Prime Ministers for similar reasons. And whilst that's a very big dream indeed and a dream that is not necessarily for

everyone, it is important to point out that there are many other positions in life from which one can effect important social change. Thirdly, just dreaming big and achieving what you set out to do, can be great inspiration for other people, in and of itself. Dreams of personal fulfilment can inspire dreams of social change, and vice versa.

Are you already a dreamer? If yes, that's great. This book will hopefully enrich your understanding of why it is great to be one, and help you through moments when the world tries to test your determination to dream big. If not, then please let me try to persuade you of why you should dream big, by reading on. First, I want you to consider these two ideas:

Chapter 2

Most of Us Actually Want to Dream Big. I'll Show You Why

2.1 The Culture of Youth is Actually a Culture of Dreams

People who identify as dreamers, people who actually confess to dreaming big in life, whilst not rare, are clearly not in the majority either. But I do believe that there are more 'dreamers' than those who would like to confess. You see, whilst society does not celebrate dreamers generally, it celebrates youth, the state of being young.

People love being young. Most people would rather be 40 than 60, many would rather be 25 than 40, and it is even common to prefer being 18 over being 25. Given that age is just a number, and in the modern world health generally does not deteriorate until late in life, why do so many people prefer being young, even with the lack of experience and the lack of money that often comes with being young?

2.2 Age is not just a number, it's a mindset

Society tends to think of 20-somethings and quite often 30-somethings as people who are young, vibrant, have a great lifestyle and an endlessly optimistic future. Almost every movie that features somebody in their 20s or early 30s portrays their character in this light. After all, 30 is the new 20, and 40 is the new 30, right?

Apparently, out there in the land of the real world, 25 may as well be the new 50. If I could have ten dollars every time I hear somebody under 35 spoke about how old they felt now, I would probably have enough money to buy a car with the money now.

I have been talking about premature aging up to this point. But unless we have a solid idea of when and how people actually become 'old people', any talk of premature aging is on shaky ground. After all, I can argue that Australia

really isn't located down under at the southern end of the world but at the centre of the world, and that countries in the northern hemisphere have drawn the equator at the wrong place. But then science can easily refute me in that case.

So where do we draw the line between 'young' and 'old'? Is it 40? 50? Or 60?

I actually believe being old is not a number, but a life stage you enter when you are ready to. When 25 year olds get told that they are old, it often causes a crisis (as we have been talking about so far). When 40 year olds get told that they are old, it doesn't cause such a major crisis usually, but they surely don't like it much either. But when a 70 year old gets told that they are old, chances are that they would be willing to accept it as a matter of fact. The typical 70 year old doesn't enjoy the physical limitations of being old, like lower mobility, back pain and

having to take their medication every day, but they are probably not that bothered to be considered by society as old people.

I believe people are content to accept the label 'old' when they are ready. This would be when they have done what they set out to do in life, and have played the role they were born to play. This surely can be said of most 70 year olds out there, hence their contentment with being old. At 40, chances are that you have only very partially achieved the above contentment, hence you don't want to be old yet. At 25, chances are that you haven't even fully explored your dreams and your own narrative in life, to be told that you are old is like being told that life is almost over even before it really had a chance to bloom. In other words, you are old and are contented to be so when you feel that you have done your life's work. To tell a 25 or a 40 year old that they are old is simply illogical

and cruel, even if that is what our media is effectively saying.

Old is settled, content and accomplished then. The opposite of 'old' is 'young'. If that's the case, then young must carry with it ideas of being unsettled, not yet content and wanting more in life. Because being old is settled and content, it is calm and charming in its own way, and not only the people who are ready to be old can appreciate that, we the not-yet-old can also appreciate these qualities in old people. Because being young is unsettled and unsatisfied, it carries with it an energy to do things, an energy to dream, an energy to achieve. In other words, the state of being 'young' carries with it the required energy to do what it takes to become accomplished and contented in life, and when the work is done, this energy ceases and is replaced by a calm contented feeling that is the state of being 'old'. In life, if you want to live it fully, first you need

to be young and fully embrace that spirit of being young by embracing your dreams and going for it with all your energy. Then, when your life's work is done, you will enter into a contented old age. The more you are able to embrace being young, the more you are able to have a contented, golden old age.

2.3 Did dreaming fail you? You might just have given up too soon

Perhaps once you too were influenced by that dreaming big culture, and some time ago you dared to dream big. And then the dream never came true. You became so disappointed that you stopped dreaming, and now actively avoid that dreaming big culture. In other words, you would rather become old prematurely rather than get hurt again. You just can't let yourself get hurt again. Perhaps you also know quite a few friends in the same situation too.

That really doesn't surprise me much. I know quite a few friends who feel the same way too.

Let me ask you one thing: how long did you give that dream to come to fruition? One year? Maybe two or three years? After all, in the movies dreams always come true in a year or two, or even sooner, right? Therefore, if it

hasn't come true in three years or so, it's surely time to quit, right? By the way, it wasn't just that it hadn't come true in three years, I worked so hard during this period and have absolutely nothing to show for it. Shouldn't I just quit trying?

The truth is, there's a great chance that the dream which 'never came true' wasn't doomed, you just gave up too soon. As I said before, dreams take much longer to achieve nowadays, even though ironically people these days have much less patience.

When you think about it, working hard on something for five years or more and having nothing to show for it isn't really unusual nowadays. It also makes perfect sense. When you have a dream and you set out to achieve it, you have almost unlimited hope and energy that you can pour into it. But the world is so big

and complex nowadays, and there are so many possibilities everywhere. Just searching through these possibilities and opportunities to find the right path for you can take years. And with a complex system comes more barriers too. This applies to relationships, careers, and goals of all types. Realistically, you may need to work on something for ten years or more before you see some results, and it may take even longer for you to feel like 'you have arrived'. Meanwhile, if you don't have the right strategy and the right worldview, your energy and optimism can fizzle out within a few years, when you are likely just at the beginning of the long journey.

Popular culture is unhelpful here again. I guess movies generally have a limited time frame, and it also sounds not hopeful enough from a marketing perspective if dreams are shown to unfold throughout many years. But way too many movies show dreams that come true within a year or two, and that has created

unrealistic expectations in many people, similar to teenage millionaire celebrities and 20-something IT CEOs. The fictional world is reinforcing an illusion of the real world here, and it just makes the possibility of almost overnight success all the more real. But it is ultimately unhelpful, because people inevitably find that their dreams haven't come true yet two years down the road, and that false hope turns to despair.

Therefore, it's time to set yourself free from the dreaming prison now. If you have a dream that 'never came true', it's time to have a look at it again. Surely, many years may have passed, and conditions may be very different in your life and in your worldview. You may need to adjust many parameters of the dream. But if you still believe in the spirit of the dream, the essence of it, that is all that matters. It's time to give your dream(s) another go.

The outside world is often hostile to your dreams. In fact, it is a hazard for your dreams, which stand a high chance of being killed either slowly or quickly by this outside world if you don't protect them well. And it does all this without even trying.

For example, if you believe that you need a promotion at work now to get to where you want to get to, and nobody decides to give you that promotion, your dreams may just die quite a bit. When you write a 600 page novel and nobody even wants to read a page of it, that would also seriously harm your dreaming spirit for some time. The fact is that they probably wanted a specific person for the new opening, or that people were too busy to read your novel, especially amongst 1000+ other ones to choose from, but that never makes anything better, right?

The world is one giant, inhumane machine that get things done every day when viewed from a certain angle. Life goes on, but the system never cares about how many people are destroyed by it. This is the reality of a world that has become so big and so complex, with various established interests running every part of the system. There's no denying it.

But it is up to you to protect your dreams, especially when it may face some darker times. It is up to you to keep them alive and healthy, so they can keep your life energized. In the next few sections, I will talk about how to protect and nurture your dreams.

So, in short, dreams take a long time to come true, and you have to keep working at it, keeping the dreamer's spirit, for a long time,

whilst society tells you no, again and again. Looks hard, right? That's why people often give up too soon. However, once they do, they start becoming nostalgic for their youth, when they hadn't given up yet. But you don't need to be 10 years younger to dream again. In Chapter 3, I will offer a few strategies to reboot your dreamer's spirit, if you have become disillusioned by life. (If that's not what you need right now, however, feel free to skip over it.) In Chapter 4, I will discuss how we can keep our dreams alive, despite everybody else saying no. (Everyone should find this useful.)

Chapter 3

Rebooting the Dreamer's Spirit

3.1 Let's re-consider these two ideas first

1) Your Dreams often Tell You What You were Made to be

As a species, we are each equipped with different strengths, so we can work together effectively. However, some sections of modern society have neglected this and instead demanded everyone to meet the same standards. This has created a hard life for many. If we want a world of good wellbeing, we need to recognise the facts and start recognising everyone's strengths and help them to use them to their best. Start with yourself - don't let the system tell you you are inferior. If you see other people affected by this, talk to them and make them feel better. And next time, when you can change or improve the system, remember to go by this philosophy.

Here's one thing that I cannot say enough of: you should never force yourself to be

something you are not. I have found that, even if you tailor yourself painfully to fit something you are not, you will lose in the end, and bitterly, because you are not given a chance to escape whatever bitterness you got into since everyone thinks you must like it to get into it.

2) Most things are Possible, if only you Try

Most people have a whole catalogue of wishes they would classify as pure day-dreams. When they were young they probably thought they were not day-dreams. But years of being told otherwise and 'learning the hard way' has hardwired this behaviour into them.

But when you think of it, most dreams are quite achievable. These days you don't need much money to research and experience (at least to some extent) many cultures in the world. You can learn almost anything out there if you just get the right resources, which there are plenty

out there. And just dedicating half an hour to each activity is enough to learn a lot long-term.

If you want to bring your dreams to the next level, if you want to be a recognised pro, then you will have to work at it - your craft, even if it is very good, takes time to get recognised, especially if it doesn't fit well with the set standards and perceptions out there. But then, don't give up here! Just achieving those dreams to a level that you find fulfilling (e.g. becoming some sort of expert) should be a drive to continue. Remember, many of the most recognised pro's have said that some of their best moments and best work are often some before they had become recognised - e.g. when an artist was a poor unknown or a band was playing in garages and pubs. Your current moment may be your defining moment - never give up too soon.

3.2 Overcoming Cynicism

The most important thing to do to be able to start dreaming again is to overcome cynicism. Cynics have always been around in history, and we all know that it isn't the happiest way to live. You never see great historical achievements made by cynics, nor have they come up with effective ways to wellbeing - it is the dreamers, even how unrealistic they sometimes are, that end up being successful in life. Yet why do we still get drawn to cynicism that much? It comes through failure.

Dreaming and keeping the dreams up require bravery. Dreams are tested by reality, harsh reality, and it is only those who can overcome these that can find the prize in the end. In this process, it can often seem that turning cynical and uncaring can be easier, in fact it is often much easier. In life, I have cried a lot for my dreams, did a lot of things that others have deemed useless, got my self-esteem destroyed

many times. Yet I have found that whenever I gave up a little, the situation is even worse. When I give up my hope for the future - what is there to fight for? And then I become a robot in everyday life. Similarly, if I give up wanting this world to be better, then do I silently agree to condemn those disadvantaged people to be condemned forever?

This is enough for me to keep dreaming, no matter how hard it is.

3.3 Myths Against the Dreamer's Life - Time to Bust Them

The key to happiness is not in gaining more and more material and money, as modern society has proven. Are we truly more happy than those who lived 50 or 100 years ago? Yes and no. If you are a career woman (like me) you would probably not be happy living in 1905. If you were gay and lived in 1955 - that's probably quite a good definition of hell. But those changes did not come from our material achievements. From our material achievements - yes they did provide some comfort, but not to a great extent. The only achievements that probably contributed to wellbeing a lot were a small percentage of the many things that happened - to name a few, advances in medicine, means of communication, and the mighty computer. A new brand of salad dressing may make our day once, but it cannot keep an individual happy for more than a few months, let alone make humankind happier for a long time.

What do the great achievements have in common, that a new brand of salad dressing does not have? The great achievements let us do more in life, the new salad dressing cannot do that. I believe that, as human beings we all have different strengths (and weaknesses may I add), and we are all born to achieve special tasks, things that can help the world greatly. The more we can do these effectively, the happier we will be, and the happier the world will be. Experts call this 'self actualisation'. But I believe that it is just common sense stuff. They say there is an Einstein, a Mozart, a Mandela, or equivalent, in each of us - it just needs to be discovered and promoted. This sounds cliché, but it's true. If you are asked to work like a robot instead, you won't be contented. Just like you won't be contented to lying around and running around like a dog does or chasing after cheese like a rat does every day - you know that

it is not your job, and that is not the meaningful work for you.

So what is stopping us from achieving more of that? No one single thing is responsible, I believe, but a lot of myths that people have set up and accustomed to over the years. These myths we have collectively believed, and they are pervasive in our culture. If we break them, we will do ourselves some good, and yes, to the rest of the world some good too. If you help your friends break free from these myths, you will be doing some good for them too.

Now Let us start Busting the Myths that Stop you from Getting to Where you Should Be...

Big Myth Number One: Is Feeling Good Selfish?

Feeling good about yourself is the start of an enjoyable and productive life. I believe this is the most important thing that you can do to change your life around. And no, I don't count myself as selfish in thinking this. Without trying to feel good about yourself and the things you can do, you cannot realise your potential in life, and you will end up succumbing to the 'it's all because life is shitty' thoughts.

Feeling good starts from your mind. To believe you can do well in what you wish to, and to believe what you are doing is good, is the first step to feeling good. You don't need anybody to tell you that you are a worthy person. You just need to be confident that you are making a positive contribution to the world. But that feeling does not come with empty words or empty thoughts. What you need to do is to find out more about yourself, find your purpose in life, work hard for it and cherish it. More on this later.

They say a good feeling and goodwill is not forever. Sure, it's not, like any other thing, but you can make it last longer in life so that in most periods of your life you will be in this mood, and as a result you will be happy and productive throughout most of your life. The feeling will last if you try to remain hopeful in any situation and try hard to find a better way in the face of unduly unpleasant feeling (this is not to be confused with escapism), rather than just to 'acknowledge that life is supposed to be bad' - because that's not true. Just tell yourself that, and you only have to try that attitude a few times before it all makes sense. By that point you will have had past experiences to back you up so the attitude becomes automatic. But to make the first step, you need to change your attitude - deliberately.

Some people say that to live a life with the goal of feeling good is selfish. Well, I can't disagree more. If your definition of Feeling Good is all about getting drunk and hung over and dancing through till sunrise and sleeping through the day, then yes, that is selfish. But there is nothing more meaningful than trying to be optimistic about the world, and from that perspective trying to find the your work in your life that is meaningful and takes your unique experiences and abilities to benefit the people around you, or even the rest of the world.

Remaining fresh and happy is always more helpful than floating in a sea of decay. The option is all in your mind. So start your happy life today!

If only we all appreciated Feeling Good as a Common Goal...

...Then we would all be happier and more productive. Yes, more productive, and thus doing more things that can improve our lives collectively. These days it's all about productivity, in every single industry. But my experience tells me that, long term productivity can only come from a good feeling about life. Stress and deadlines can bring about short term adrenaline fuelled productivity, but on the long run they wear everyone out.

Your feelings are usually useful signals. Taking good care of your body by listening to its signals is the first step to a comfortable life.

Though on the other hand, we all know that certain unrestrained desires can cause havoc in a modern society, like the urge to fight, hard-

restraining them is an uphill battle and not a good way at all.

The key to looking after yourself is to understand what your mind/body needs and how you can usefully employ it. We can use it for putting people to their best use, something sometimes called 'human resource management' in the business world, and is very important for productivity. For example, those with a lot of 'physical energy' may participate in sport or physical work rather than sit cooped up in the office and spend their weekends wanting to start a fight. If you happen to be a maths expert but poor in the languages, you would indeed do better to contribute to the scientific or engineering world than to spend your time in linguistics. These are perfectly apparent examples. But there are more subtle parallels in our everyday life that we often don't pay enough attention to. Like trying to stand up to pressure on you to do something that can only

make you depressed on a long-term basis because it's 'good for you'. From my experience, 80% of the time it won't be good for you. Which brings me onto my next myth.

Big Myth Number Two: Follow Your Heart is Not Good for You

I don't know who made up this myth, but it is quite counter-intuitive. And maybe because of the idiosyncratic nature of the very statement itself, nobody actually states this myth aloud. But like my first myth, this one is quite pervasive in culture too. It often comes in ideas like to think about what is practical, 'the reality', and so forth. But while it may not really be a good idea to quit your day job just because you want to go to India for a month, having an ideal and working to it is a very noble thing to do, even if some parts of the ideal may not be very practical. Most inventions in this world wouldn't have come into being if everyone was 'practical'

based. But somehow, everyone from our parents to 'productivity experts' tell us to 'stop wasting time daydreaming'.

Actually, I believe they are actually getting the opposite of what they want. Following Your Dreams serves two functions - one is that it helps us get towards doing what we ought to in life, as the process is driven by following what our minds tell us what we are passionate, comfortable and good at doing and what we are not. Those in the process of trying to do what they ought to also feel better about life, thus have a better physical and mental wellbeing. The other important function is that some things can only be dreamt of - like the great inventions of the world. If nobody ever followed their dreams, we would still be stuck in the forests, eating raw animals and dressed in leaves.

People say the phrase 'follow your heart' more and more these days but actually people, in many circumstances, may actually be following their hearts less and less. In the advent of advice being so plentiful and mistakes being so expensive, people consult more and think less. (Note that this book is not about advice really - it doesn't tell you what to do specifically, rather it tells of a lifestyle you can follow that will do you good and in the process do the world some good too.)

However, this is problematic. One can only think for oneself. Others' choices are often unsuitable and may even lead to unhappiness or potential not fully achieved. Therefore, when you are required to make a choice yourself, do it yourself!

Big Myth Number Three: You are Useless / Helpless

Big Myth Number Four: You are Not the One Destined to Change Things

I will consider these myths together as they are actually two forms of the same myth, aimed at everyday tasks and big dreams respectively.

Thinking that you are worthless or unessential?
Thinking that there are too many people who are better than you? You are not alone, indeed. With so much of the two aforementioned myths going around, that is not surprising. But it's time to abolish these thoughts. It's time to abolish these thoughts because they stop you from dreaming. And we need to follow our dreams to do us justice and do the world good, remember?

Here's an exercise that can help some of us do that. Think of what you do best. Think of your presence, and what it can do to people. For

example, by your presence you may be able to induce happiness, calmness, motivation etc. and the effect can be seen in everyday life almost from the moment you start doing it. Think of the ideas you are good at thinking, at what they can do. (You really need to block out the 'they're useless' voices for this one - try to consider each of the ideas that you authored without considering practicability for this moment). Your ideas may also go a long way if you just dream. Think of what may happen if your ideas can go a long way. They are not so lame after all, are they? Think of what you do best. Everyone can do them, you may say. But really? Think of your presences and ideas PLUS your skills. You have got a mix that much fewer people have now. What can this mix do for the world? Think of your experiences, and what they can add to the mix? Your ideas are unique and so are your experiences, and therefore so are what they can contribute. Your presence conveys the ideas in a way that is uniquely yours. Your skills are what will help you achieve

the tasks that lie ahead. They are all valuable and they are what make you valuable.

Big Myth Number Five: You Can't Be Happy for Very Long

There are times that come and you don't expect it. And there are also times that have gone and you miss so much. Many people I've met recently have been stuck in the latter situation. Symptom 1 is: They usually yell 'Wow, I'm bored'. Symptom 2 is a deteriorating efficiency at work. and Symptom 3 is deteriorating health, especially mentally.

As you can see, helplessness seems to be the common underlying theme here. The people here are all complaining that they can't help themselves. This feeling is fostered by a culture where you are expected to feel much less than well for significant periods of your life because,

well, this is life. But this is just another one of those dirty myths. Wellbeing is our key to knowing that all is well with our mind and body, and thus a lack of wellbeing is a warning sign, not something to take for granted in life.

Ask yourself, what you would do in this situation? Sit there and do nothing? Let them get you? Let the growing shadow of darkness gradually engulf you? Or walk actively towards the source of the light? I would choose the latter, because it means I don't have to be engulfed.

For starters, many people help themselves by getting close enough to what they want to do. For example, if there are not enough parties around I will throw my own. If there is nothing to do I will create something for me and my friends to have fun with. If there is nothing special happening that day then it is time for me

to do something about it. Starting by small things like having your friends sign an entry in your diary would be good. In short, the possibilities are endless.

But that's just the start. What we should do is to achieve a balance in our lives so that we don't need to fear going without wellbeing. And the balance should be automatic and inherent - you shouldn't need to chase after the 'next party' to feel well. We can only find that balance in time, but you should start working towards it today. How can you start? I believe that in finding that balance, finding what lets you have a sense of wellbeing and trying to do more of it is important. Your mind and body are good signals that tell of that - so listen to them, rather than dismiss them with a 'life is like that'.

Big Myth Number Six - You need to Change your Personality / Style

Ah, this is probably the most public and acceptable of all the myths out there today. There are whole books written on it, even a whole industry based on it. Apparently some personalities are bad and successful and effective people don't have them. As a result, if we want to be successful, we need to change our personalities to be like those who are successful.

But you can only say this if you ignore the vast range of personalities among the people who are successful in today's world. Bill Gates is widely known to not be the easiest to get along with, while Oprah Winfrey is much more supportive. There are obsessive people and relaxed people, creative people and robotic people, romantic people and practical people, who have all found success.

The key is not to change your personality, but to build on it, and avoid its bad side. Those people who succeed in doing this do well in life. They become the passionate, the analytical, the innovative and so on. Those people who don't become every negative type - the violent, the cynical, the unrealistic and so on.

The first step is to understand our personality, not reject it, because it is our greatest friend and our greatest foe at the same time. It is our greatest friend because it is one of the biggest tools in our toolbox to help us do what we are destined to, as showcased by the great masters of influence, from Oprah to Mandela to Clinton, who each have different personalities but are equally captivating. It is our greatest foe because if we get on the wrong side of it, it can really ruin our life, as seen in many sad cases in life (unnamed of course, but numerous) who have tried to do something that is really not for

them and failed miserably (and hence why they are all unnamed).

Why are so many people in the world afraid of showing, let alone studying their personality? It is clear that they are afraid that they will not be accepted, because they do not have the 'perfect personality'. Worse, some of the atypical ones, those that are probably most destined for greatness due to their uniqueness, are afraid that to be different is to be a 'freak'. But this is an illusion! And, this should be clear when you have a look at the people that have succeeded in gaining popularity, setting trends, selling well or making a mark in the scheme of things. All of them are 'different'! Many of those who have made the greatest contributions are exactly those who were bullied at school because they were different, not those 'perfect' types you find in management books. Sadly, other 'different' people have instead gone and wasted their lives on withdrawing from life or even

becoming a real pest to society (much to the delight of those who want to prove the 'perfect personality' theories), because they just can't see this. But clearly, the choice is up to you.

The world needs every personality, just not any one of them in their bad or toxic forms. If everybody were about the same, and nobody bothered to create their own 'brand', the world would be standing still and there will be virtually no big progresses in all areas of life. So, my advice is, cherish your 'difference' and use it well!

Big Myth Number Seven - You Are Not the One Destined to Change Things

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going around, that is not surprising. But it's time to abolish these thoughts. It's time to abolish these thoughts because they stop you from dreaming. And we need to follow our dreams to do us justice and do the world good, remember? Here's an exercise that can help some of us do that.

Think of what you do best. Think of your presence, and what it can do to people. For example, by your presence you may be able to induce happiness, calmness, motivation etc. and the effect can be seen in everyday life almost from the moment you start doing it. Think of the ideas you are good at thinking, at what they can do. (You really need to block out the 'they're useless' voices for this one - try to consider each of the ideas that you authored without considering practicability for this moment). Your ideas may also go a long way if you just dream. Think of what may happen if your ideas can go a long way. They are not so

lame after all, are they? Think of what you do best. Everyone can do them, you may say. But really? Think of your presences and ideas PLUS your skills. You have got a mix that much fewer people have now. What can this mix do for the world? Think of your experiences, and what they can add to the mix? Your ideas are unique and so are your experiences, and therefore so are what they can contribute. Your presence conveys the ideas in a way that is uniquely yours. Your skills are what will help you achieve the tasks that lie ahead. They are all valuable and they are what make you valuable.

3.4 Building that Dreamer's Life

They all say that it is the little changes in life that count. And it is true! Big changes are hard to make, and are often accumulations of small changes anyway. So starting with the small changes is the way to go, usually.

Make just a little change in life today, and you may be onto something already. It can make a great difference! It may be that you are tired of your routine trips. Try to catch the alternative bus if you can afford to be home 10 minutes later! You may think it's just a trip, so what etc. But that trip may inspire you and refresh you so you can do better work.

It may be that your surroundings bore you. If so, change them! Change your decorations around or add 1 or 2 items here and there to make your working/living space feel somewhat different may just give you that energy boost you need. It

may be that your neighbourhood is too familiar.
Shop in another part of town, perhaps on the
way home!

These are just some things that you may not
need to be any richer than you are now to do.

People can Dream, Machines Cannot.

Therefore:

The Most Important Change - Stop Being a Machine.

People nowadays often comment on how the people around them are becoming more and more like machines. Is that actually true? Probably yes, probably no. But a large part of what they are referring to is the fact that the world is becoming more and more impersonal.

Some blame it on the technology proliferating in our world. Is there a problem with this? Actually no, since the machines themselves are becoming more and more 'human'. Also, machines are just tools, and used well they can actually assist in interpersonal relationships, as some who have used internet dating have found out.

But why are some of us living as machines then?
By choice or coercion, probably more by choice
than coercion actually.

Let's look at the main difference between
humans and machines. Humans have these
superior qualities:

- 1) Humans can think for themselves.
- 2) Humans can act outside a previously set of
instructions.
- 3) Humans have much higher fault tolerance.

Machines are much more productive, however.
Imagine how many more people a company will
have to use to do the same tasks if they did not
have computers? They are productive because
they are designed to do the same things over
and over again, without the need to think at all.

You would imagine that if people did the thinking, and machines worked on the 'productivity', then everything should be good. Also, if humans became machines then nobody would be doing any thinking, and we would have productivity for nothing. Therefore, it follows that now that machines can do the 'boring stuff', humans should actually become more human to maximize the productivity.

However, the problem is that, within many companies there exist mundane tasks that are require a bit of intelligence and hence can't be done properly by a computer, yet don't really require much human thinking. In short, they require a human working like a machine to complete. And in the current structure of our society, such work is numerous.

This problem will only go away with social restructuring, which I guess will happen in the

next few decades. But for now, if you have to mainly do such humans-as-machines work during the day, it is up to you to maintain your complete, thinking humanness in other parts of your life. If you really put effort into doing so, you will do yourself some good, as you will be able to understand yourself better (a human attribute), and therefore choose things for yourself wiser. You will also be doing the world some good by helping to make it more human.

In conclusion, the answer to 'are you living as a machine' is that of a choice (with you), like all other lifestyle questions. Also, remember not to coerce others into becoming machines by giving them overloaded, mechanical tasks. And most of all, remember to be tolerant of faults.

You Only Know Your Dreams if you Express Them, so be High on Self Expression

Talking about thinking humans and the importance of understanding yourself, self expression is something that is good for you in both these goals. It is important for self understanding and establishing your identity, which is an important step to finding out who you actually are and hence what you need in life and what your work in life is. It is also a way of valuing yourself as a special and valuable individual - if you can do this well, you are less vulnerable to the cynical forces of the world that try to tear people apart all the time.

Self expression does not require a lot of effort.

It can be your (regular/irregular) personal movies/books/music chart

It can be a point form record of your day's highlights

It can be your to-do list for the day (how amazing it will seem like to read in a years' time!)

It can be a piece of random writing you felt like doing on the train

It can be what you wrote on a note a friend gave you, after reading it

It can be.....

It can be.....endless, and

It can be a collection of all of these.

And the good news is, it is easy to start today!

Start Paying Attention to Your Own Concerns

There really is an unhealthy culture of self sacrifice out there. I think it probably originated from the idea that if everyone puts in their share of work and dedication, then the work will be done more productively. Which is true indeed, but this idea has really gone too far nowadays. When people raise concerns, they can be seen to be distracting everybody from 'real work', or worse, putting up a challenge to the status quo where 'everyone is happy'. It is this culture that has led to many people learning to suppress their concerns down to just existing in the 'subconscious', leaving the conscious mind for 'more important things'.

What's wrong with this is that most human concern actually point to sources of discomfort, and if these are not dealt with well then they can lead to chronic misery or conflict, meaning

that people will toil on without a purpose, living in misery and not being very productive either. It is in this culture that people cease to question if their lifestyles are good for their health, mental or physical. So many big 'public health problems' could be prevented if people just slowed down and... thought about their concerns.

Therefore, we need to unlearn this culture. Don't let people drown out your concerns, for they do matter. Through your concerns you may see something that past people haven't. Have a questioning mind to the beliefs out there, and how things are done, even if they are 'traditionally accepted' (I am not a big fan of this idea at all, as you can see). All that out there may not really be right, and concepts are often contaminated by centuries of brainwashing, right?

Because this culture of suppression is so prevalent, you may actually find people trying to train it back into you. Keep it out at all costs, now that you know it is not doing you any good. Keep your humility and clear head though, and remember to be calm in the face of 'the world collapsing upon you'. That way, you will sail through the storms that an 'aware person' unfortunately needs to deal with in this suppressive culture.

Reviews help bring out hidden wishes, so Let's Start a Life Review Too!

It is helpful to realize what you really want in life, and from there not only will you start making better decisions for yourself, you may also gain more than a little bit of insight into what your work in life really is.

Start a life review today to map out all your dreams and wishes, dissatisfactions, and other ideas, and start finding easy and practicable ways to deal with them.

If you feel that you are not living comfortably, or are unable to do the things you feel you should try and map out your discomforts. Then try to find out the reasons behind them (remember, knowledge is strength). Think of

plans which are practicable to get yourself into a more comfortable life.

If you feel that you are going nowhere in life, then you can map out your strengths and weaknesses, and what you want to do and where you want to go in life. Then think about how to put these into the life you are having now. Remember, sometimes there may not need to be that much disruption to reach a goal, if you try to fit it in the right way. While I do not believe that a four hour working week is really practical for most people, I really like how the book *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Timothy Ferriss tries to fulfil wishes and make people 'rich' by breaking the 'dream life' into little digestible pieces.

If you feel that you are not enjoying life, then you are probably not liking the things 'you have to do' in life. Start by thinking of a list of

activities you would like to do. And try to fit them into your life. Also, add plenty of variation/events to your life routine if you are feeling too bored/tied down.

Just remember, when trying to change things around. Do not take too big a step at a point. Start with the more feasible changes that also give you the most significant results first. Also, remember that thinking that 'you can do it' is the key to putting the review to work.

The world around you isn't always a Dreamy Place, so Try Very Hard to Maintain Your Space

Try very hard to maintain your space. This includes time to be yourself, express yourself, explore, and the confidence to be yourself and the fresh mind to explore. When you take care of your own space, and everyone else does the same, we will be a friendly and spacious community.

People who don't take effort to consciously maintain their space will find their space being gradually quashed by the events and 'duties' surrounding them. They will no longer be able to think for themselves or do meaningful things just for themselves, and thus they will become a machine and a concern suppressor without choice. And there are indeed many 'incentives' to give up your space in this numbers driven world, which explains why many people actually

happily give up their space. But don't give into this 'temptation' - your space is worth more than any set of numbers they can bribe you with.

3.5 Re-Defining success

Success is so hard to achieve, especially in the modern times, when once you get there, everyone else seems to be there too, and so you remain average no matter how much effort you put into things. In this climate, a lot of us end up becoming perpetually greedy and unhappy people.

There is a better way. I believe that everyone comes to this Earth with a particular set of skills and 'magic' that is their own, and everyone should be able to use this magic well in their lives. The important task for everyone is to find their work in life, and work at it, and it will be for the better of both that person and everyone else. I believe a system to encourage individuals to start doing that is important, but as such a system is still being set up, individuals themselves who get this message now will have to work hard to find their own way.

There are so many crises facing people who just want a good everyday life today. But where are the crises actually? If we have a closer look at it, much of it relates to the stress from a system can't let everyone get hold of a certain something popular, or even if you are on board now, you may get kicked off later. This is based on something called the scarcity of resources by economists. It means that everybody can't have every material demand they want because production is limited. Examples include how, in economic bad weather, you may get a pay cut and be no longer able to afford brand name items, and so you drop off the 'fashionable' scene.

While the scarcity of certain resources is not very amenable, a satisfying life is not actually scarce. The vast majority of people in society already have the means to a satisfying lives, if

they really put the thought to it. They just need to re-examine their needs. Basic human needs are food and shelter etc., and to be happy we need something more. But that does not necessarily come from a material life - in fact evidence has shown that a material life does not make one happy. The way to happiness is to, rather, define your dreams in terms of what you want to do / get out in life, and do it on your own terms, the only way in which nobody can ever stop you. If you define your life goals in terms of the material, not only does this not fulfil most dreams very well (most dreams are spiritual, but can get translated into material in some way, and busy city people who don't have enough time to think often do that), it also makes you much more vulnerable to the fact that even if society allows you on the 'rich bandwagon' now, it may not do so later.

Chapter 4

Keeping Your Dreams Alive, Despite the Odds

4.1 The Good/Bad News: Dreams take longer to achieve nowadays

In this day and age, it seems that if your dreams will come true it will happen at a much younger age than it did in previous generations. 20-year-old mega-rich celebrities and 25-year-old world changing CEOs are everywhere, and if you haven't heard of a few cases at least, you must be living under a rock.

The truth is, all this is an illusion, driven by two phenomenon: the entertainment industry's recent focus on the younger market, and the boom in computer related technologies. If you look carefully, most of the mega-rich by 25 people are either sports stars, or belong in one of the two categories mentioned above. Whilst sports stars and a few young celebrities are nothing new, this mass proliferation of young rich celebrities and young rich IT CEOs is a recent phenomenon.

The entertainment industry has, in recent years, moved towards focussing strongly on the younger section of the market. We will explore this in more detail in Chapter III Section 3.3. But the effect of this is that you get to see mega-rich 20-year-old 'celebrities' on your TV almost daily. If you happen to be a struggling 30-year-old who still doesn't know what you want in life, that would be painful to watch. I've heard fellow 20-somethings complain of seeing some teenager making big money in the entertainment industry making them feel like an old failure so many times that it's not funny anymore. If you are one of these people, think about this: behind many of these teenage 'overnight successes' are a team of CEOs, producers, marketing experts, media tycoons and the like, who have access to all the major media channels to promote their products, including the most popular TV shows, radio stations and magazines, not in one or two cities

but as a network around the world. It's often more the 'success' of a team of middle aged men with lots of money and power that you are seeing, I would go as far to say. Which means there's nothing really to be amazed by there - most commercial success in this world belong to middle aged men with lots of capital and power, no matter what business they are in.

Similarly, the proliferation of young CEOs, often under 30, in the IT field, no less prominently seen than those teenage millionaires on TV, also adds to this feeling of ourselves falling behind in the stakes of life. Computers are maybe the only field where the CEOs can be this young. This is because computers are relatively new and their development has been at a rapid pace in the past few decades, making older generations on average LESS competent than younger adults in this area despite their decades of life experience. It's probably the only area of life where this is the case, and

eventually this trend will end too. Having said that, whilst the younger generation on average is more competent with computers, very few can really do something like invent a new search engine or a new social network. I personally have been into computers since a young age, many people (of my own generation) come up to me and ask me to fix their computers, but I couldn't have started Google or Facebook by a mile. There's being good at computers, and there's being expert enough to be able to invent something useful and translate this idea into practical use on a large scale. The vast majority of young people just don't belong there, because their life's work, their calling, is elsewhere. And if it's elsewhere, the gap for young CEOs to emerge isn't there, unlike in the IT industry. Another thing: even if you are really expert at writing code and setting up big complex websites, you need the capital to essentially start a moderately sized company. This option is not available to the average computer geek - it is

available only to people with good connections to the commercial world, and who are lucky enough to have the backing of investors before their project even has a chance to take off.

If you think about it carefully, extreme youth achievement is not a reality outside of these areas of life. It is a phenomenon that has not affected 99%+ of the world at all. It's like how just because the media has reported a few cases of people in their 20s dying of cancer in the past year doesn't mean that all 20-somethings should start seriously worrying about their risks of getting cancer. What I am saying is that we should ignore these examples of extreme youth achievement, because they represent cases that have emerged out of special circumstances. Notice that I said 'special circumstances' rather than 'extraordinary ability' - having 'extraordinary ability' is good and often essential to extreme young success, but by itself, without the forces of circumstance

that we explored above, will get you nowhere near there. Flipping this idea around, you can also say that even though somebody may not have achieved extreme success at an exceptionally young age, it doesn't mean that they don't have extraordinary abilities. It often is just that they weren't in the right circumstances to get into that fast lane, which is the case 99%+ of the time anyway.

So for the 99%+ of us who cannot get into the fast lane, what does chasing our dreams look like in this day and age? It takes a surprisingly long time, as we will see.

Amongst all the illusions of extreme youth achievement being in reach for lots of young people, something is lost: for the 99% left out of the fast lane, dreams actually take longer to achieve in this day and age.

There are two reasons for this: we want more in life, and even if we didn't want more in life, the changes in society's structure mean that it takes longer just to get the basic necessities of life sorted anyway.

Let me be frank about one thing: we, as a generation, do want more in life than any other previous generation that has ever lived. We must face up to this fact, if we are to be realistic about our long road ahead. A lot of us want so much out of life that it is impossible to settle down before 30 no matter how 'efficient' your life is. And we need not be guilty about this: all our lives we have been exposed to more choices, more opportunities and more possibilities in life than any generation that grew up before us. In the 1950s, young men mostly expected to work an average 9-to-5 job and bring home the bacon, and young women

mostly expected to be housewives. There was not much of another choice for most of them. There was not only no opportunity to want something more out of life, most people didn't realise that you COULD want something more out of life. But our generation grew up differently. We have always known that we COULD want something more out of life, and most of us would not settle for an average 9-to-5 or housewife existence.

Wanting more out of life may be natural for our generation, but it comes at a cost too, like everything else. It's like if you want to buy a bigger house you have to pay more. The cost of wanting more out of life is that the road between the start of your adulthood and your destination in life is going to be longer. If you want to make an impact on this world, or even if you just want to climb a few rungs of the corporate ladder, it's going to take longer than

just aiming to get and hold down an average 9-to-5 job. There's no shortcut around this.

What's more is that for some of today's young people, not only do they want to dream big, they haven't quite figured out what their life's work is about yet. Again, in the 1950s there may not have been many possibilities to choose from, but it is very different today. In this world of so many possibilities, whilst some people may be able to pinpoint that one thing that is their calling before they even reach adulthood, others may have to search for a while before they find it. It's OK - it's like how some people find their life partner right out of college and others only find their soulmate in their 40s or beyond. Whenever there is a process of choice and searching for the right answer to make the right choice, some people are going to take longer than others. This again may contribute to a longer time to turn dreams into reality.

There's also the effect of society-wide changes. For example, if home ownership is on your to-do list, that one is going to take quite a bit longer than forty years ago. The cost of a house has gone up so much that no matter how big your salary is you cannot hope to complete that one in the same timeframe like you could in the 1970s. The longer road to one's destiny also means that many 20-somethings are unwilling to settle down. If you want to find a lifelong partner who is sure they are going to commit for life, that goal again often has to be moved to the 30s to be realistic.

Society's refusal to acknowledge that dreams take longer to achieve nowadays means that many young people actually don't realise it. They become too harsh on themselves, measuring themselves against a timeline that is quite impossible to do. They also frequently

burn out well before they reach their destination, as they haven't been psychologically prepared for the long ride ahead, and often lose the requisite youthful spirit well before they can afford to do so. In this book, one of the most important things we will look at is how to sustain this spirit of youth for the long ride that chasing your dreams mean these days.

4.2 This is What You Have to Survive Now

So you're stuck in this dead end job, have an unsatisfactory relationship (or no relationship), feel powerless to do anything about it, and I am telling you that dreams now take longer to achieve? Do I really want to get you depressed?

Unfortunately, I am just telling the truth. Dreams do take long to achieve, and I don't sugarcoat things. But fortunately, this doesn't mean that you have a decade or more of despair in front of you. Far from it. What I am saying that, the solution to the quarter life crisis is not finding an instant ticket to your dreams, because you won't be able to find one, but to find a way to allow yourself to not be burnt out, to keep your spirit of youth alive, and to keep your dreams alive until they are achieved.

Cast your memory back to high school. There's quite a large chance that you didn't want to be

there too. You may even have nostalgic memories about it now, but at that time you didn't want to be there. Yet you survived it, and in hindsight, it wasn't that bad (or why else are you nostalgic about it?). The road towards your destination in life is the same. Each day on this long road there may be things that you don't want to do, there may be frustrations here and there, and you may develop severe self doubt along the way too. Yet, as long as you know you will get out of here, and have hope about a brighter future fuelled by your dreams, you will survive, like you did in high school. And whilst you will be wanting to get to your destination as soon as possible, the days before you get there may not be bad at all - just like although you wanted to get out of high school as soon as possible, in hindsight it wasn't that bad.

When you were younger, you could have all these wild dreams about the future. But then, you also needed to deal with the reality of what

was then right now - schoolwork, exams, all the practical stuff associated with your life at the time. After all, if you failed that test, your parents would likely give you a hard time, and you didn't want that.

Now that you are an adult, it's a similar situation. In parallel with dreaming big and trying to achieve your dreams, you also need to take care of things like making ends meet and paying bills. It's just how life is. It's just that these things have replaced your schoolwork and exams as the things you 'just need to do' in life.

Don't let all these things drag you down though. Although like school you need to do these things 'well enough' to avoid trouble, you shouldn't let your spirit of dreaming get tarnished by any setbacks in these practical everyday things. After all, a poor score on one

test at school didn't affect your dreams about the future, right?

Another thing is that, for dream chasing young adults these days, 'settling down' has become a thing of the past. The practical realities of the biological clock and dreams taking longer to come true means that we often will need to think about starting families before the dreams in life have come true. However, starting a family doesn't mean we need to adopt the 'settling down' philosophy of previous generations. To us, the duties and hard work associated with starting a family is just another thing we have to juggle in life, on the long road towards achieving our dreams.

To sum it up, the bad news is that the long road towards feeling accomplished is something you will have to survive. The good news is that, with the right strategy, you will survive it well, and

eventually you will get there. The strategy is both in your mindset and in the things you do in everyday life. The rest of this book is dedicated to such strategies. They include kicking poisonous way of thinking, strategies to sustain the optimism of youth and the capacity to dream through a long, sometimes difficult time, and how to continue to believe in yourself when the rest of the world no longer believes in you.

4.3 You need a Roadmap, and Some Priorities

With dreams taking longer than ever to achieve, the ride can seem long and dark at times.

Having an all or none approach can add to this. This is where you have one big end goal, which probably won't be achieved until 10 or 20 years later. Meanwhile, you will have a decade or two of feeling not achieved, desperately asking 'are we there yet'. This could be enough to zap your spirit out before you can get to the end.

Therefore, there are two things I wouldn't recommend a person to set out on their journey of dreams without: a roadmap, and a sense of priorities.

The first thing is to get your priorities right. You want that package that is your ultimate goal at the end, but you have to decide which parts of it you really want the most, and which parts of

it must come before the others. Set out on achieving these first.

Say your goal is to live in New York City and write a book about it. However, you currently live in a small town in New Zealand, and don't even have the money to travel to New York to have a look at the place. Your two first goals may be to familiarise yourself with New York, its landmarks, its culture and the way people think about it, and get a higher paying job so you can save some money for your eventual move. With the internet nowadays, it is very easy to get somewhat familiar with big global destinations like New York. You can get familiar with where things are in the city for a start. Google maps or any other mapping application can be useful for that. You may try to get into Street View and 'walk' a block or two to get a sense of how the places connect together on the street level. You would also try to read the many articles people write about New York. Articles like 50 Things I

Love About New York or 40 Reasons to Hate New York, or even things like 30 Signs You Grew Up in Manhattan can be very useful sources of information for you. It will take years to go through all of that and get it absorbed into your brain, trust me. Meanwhile, during your day, you may like to start looking for a job if you don't already have one, or look for a second job or a higher paying one. You may decide to return to education so that you can get even higher paying jobs later on.

Then you need to draw up a roadmap. Using the example above, once you have saved some money, your next step may be to move to Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, to get a feel of how city life is like. Auckland may be a lot smaller than New York, but it has skyscrapers, international food and lots of business activity, some of the experiences you will find in New York. It may help you get used to New York when you eventually get there. An

alternative would be to take a two month holiday in a nearby large multicultural city like Sydney, Australia, which also has all these things, perhaps on a slightly larger scale. Meanwhile, you will want to continue to connect with the cultural phenomenon that is New York. You may want to watch so many New York movies that you become so familiar with the settings you can point to where they are exactly on a map. You may want to make some New York friends online. When you feel you have enough knowledge and connection to New York, perhaps you can start writing parts of your book. You will have to modify and rewrite parts of it when you actually get to see the place, but it's great to make a start when you already have something to write.

Eventually, your dream may be achieved in a similar fashion to your roadmap plan, or maybe not. Maybe you'll find something even more suitable in your life. But in any case, none of it

goes to waste, and every bit of it would have helped coloured your life vividly. Twenty years down the line, it's quite likely you would have lived in New York and finished your book. Or alternatively, you may have decided to just settle in Auckland, but have a cultural connection to New York. By then you might have already seen the city on two or three different trips there during your annual leaves, paid for with the money you saved over the years. Although you didn't write a book about living in New York, you did write a book about your connection to New York and your opinions about the city as a New Zealander, an even more unique thing. You might have also written another book about living in Auckland, or perhaps a book comparing and contrasting the two cities. Either way, the dream did not go to waste.

One important thing is that you enjoy the process as much as the outcome. In my example

above, there would be new experiences and inspirations every year along the way. It's not the final act of moving to New York (or not) that mattered, it's the knowledge, experiences and friendships gained over the years that were the main gains from this big dream.

4.4 The Secret Ingredient to Battling On Whilst Keeping your Dream Alive: Feeling Special

Besides having the right mindset, the roadmap, and the priorities, there's another secret ingredient to keeping your dreams alive for a long time, even in the face of adversity. It is believing that you are special.

Let me tell you something: you are special. You are special because of who you are, the way you see things, and the way you do things. You are special because of your experiences, and how you dealt with them. You are special because of all this combined, and as a result, what you have to offer to the world.

You are special, and you were born to do some special work in this life. You may not know what

it is yet, but the dreams you have in your life will guide you there. Once you have this in mind, you will be able to face any adversity, and keep your dreams alive and energetic.

You may ask, how can everyone be special? Am I telling a lie here? After all, who is ordinary then, if everyone is special?

Actually, everyone, every human being has been special from day one of history. Computers can be ordinary, but all humans are special. But although society has existed for so long, until now it has not been evolved enough to allow everyone's specialness to be recognised - just like once upon a time it was not ready to embrace ideas like equality for men and women and rights for gay couples. We are the first generation where society has become ready to embrace this idea - hence many of us were taught this idea when we were

growing up. This idea alone can cause a revolution, however, and there are signs that sections of society are pushing back against it as a result. We must push forward with this revolutionary idea, however, and ignore those voices that want to take us back.

For many generations, people grew up with the expectation that most people are going to be ordinary in life, and only a selected few are special people. Generation upon generation have lived like this, not knowing what they missed out upon.

Actually, everyone, every human being has been special from day one of history. But until now society has not been evolved enough to allow everyone's specialness to be recognised - just like once upon a time it was not ready to accept ideas equality between men and women. As a result, many generations lived and

died believing that they were ordinary, and never achieved the full function of their specialness in life. It's just like how women lived and died in many ages past not knowing how they could be seen as equal to men and have the same rights in law. But once we have moved forward from there, looking back we see how limiting the past paradigm was.

The idea that we are all special is capable of starting a revolution in and of itself. No longer will people just accept that they will live like every generation that has come before them. No longer will people just accept that they are interchangeable with their other colleagues at work, as if everybody was a small, easily replaceable part in a large machine. Everyone will live their life trying to find their life's work, and express and use their specialness in different ways.

You are special, and you were born to do some special work in this life. You are the way you are because there is some special work out there that requires someone like you to do it. Without you, that piece of the puzzle will be missing.

You are special because you are special to someone. It may be your partner, your parents, or somebody you will meet in the future. It may even be someone you don't know - but they know you, and cherish your existence.

You are special, because no other mind in the world thinks and works in the same way, and has the same material (experiences and memories) to work on. As a result, no other mind will have the same output on a given topic.

You are special, and the world would be missing a unique part of its richness if you did not exist. It would be like a colourful quilt made up of pieces of different colours, but one piece was missing. Wouldn't it be sad?

Even your imperfections are unique, and they make you even more special. Only with your imperfections you could have experienced the world in this particular way, and have the particular memories you have. You can then use that experience to help other people, especially others with the same imperfections.

4.5 When the World will not Accept that 'You are Special'

Unfortunately, even if you believe that you are special, it doesn't follow that everyone will believe the same about you. In fact, it is almost ridiculous to expect the big machine that is 'the system' to believe that anybody is special, when it clearly functions more like robot than human.

Even if you have it resolved that you are special and you are going to embrace it, the world will still pour buckets of cold water onto your flame from time to time.

I believe the best solution to this problem is to continue to do the work you need to do, whilst ignoring this kind of critique. It's like how you dealt with the school teacher who never liked you, who would find opportunities to criticise you whenever he could. I think the best attitude to have to those parts of the world which insist

on treating you like nothing special is the same attitude you had to this teacher. You still had to do the assignments and tests in his class, but you knew what he said was usually irrelevant. You did the work in his class well enough, but you avoided letting his critiques get to you.

The 'everyone is special' revolution may be good for everyone on paper, but as with all revolutions that have come before, there are people who stand to lose out, or feel they stand to lose out. As a result, there are people who are going to push back against it. This time, we do have quite a challenge: part of those pushing back are loaded up with money, and are busily pouring their unlimited buckets of cold water on our generation.

Some old style bosses may feel that if everyone feels special, then nobody is going to be doing the menial jobs that need being done. They feel

that our generation has a 'sense of entitlement' and is therefore not willing to do the unglamorous work. But anybody from our generation will recognise this as a straw man. Most of our generation is more than willing to work hard. It is because of our feeling of specialness that we are willing to work harder than previous generations. We do feel we have special work to do in life, but we don't feel particularly 'entitled' to anything.

Another group is those who just fear any major social change and put up their resistance accordingly. But resistance to social change is always futile - think the end of bans on interracial marriage, gender equality, computers, the internet, gay rights. The resisting side has lost every time. And that has been good for us - if they had won we would have missed out on major progress every time. Being on the wrong side of history just because you fear change is always misguided.

Yet another group are those who are sincere about solving the problem of the quarter life crisis, but have gone about it in the wrong way. They think that we must have our high ambitions and endless but yet unfulfilled dreams stripped away from us so that we can live normal lives like generations that came before us. And at the core of our ambitions and dreams is this feeling of specialness. Therefore, they feel that they must undo our 'everyone is special' upbringing.

In conclusion, those who want to kill off the 'everyone is special' revolution are all misguided people. However, that doesn't change the fact that they keep putting out their discouraging messages, blaming the educators for teaching us this way, blaming our parents for bringing us up this way, as if they could put the genie back in the bottle. And since they continue to be

misguided and act accordingly, we need to protect the flame of hope that came from our special knowledge - that we are special - from these constant buckets of cold water.

4.6 Taking your Dreams Outside of the System

The world, when taken as a whole, can often be seen as being run by one big impersonal and unemotional system that 'just works' but will sometimes quash your dreams without even trying. Realising this, one great way to protect and nurture your dreams is to take as much of it 'outside the system' as possible.

But what is 'in the system' and what is 'outside the system'? Anything that requires input or approval from established interests as an essential ingredient for success is relying on part of 'the system', I believe. If your life goals are that you want to travel the world or write a novel that other people will want to read, they really don't rely much on any company, government or any established interests, if you think about it. Surely, it may take some time and money, but you can work towards it with your own effort. But if your dream relies on a

series of promotions within a corporate or political hierarchy, then they essentially rely on the decisions of powerful people in charge of different parts of the system. I am not saying that those dreams are any less valid, it's just that putting all your dreaming eggs in a basket like those is a big risk to take in life. It essentially sets you up to have a high risk of being quashed in spirit.

Fortunately, there are many ways of achieving the same kind of dream in this world, and usually not all of them need to involve 'the system' that much. For example, if your dream is to 'make a difference in the technology world', you can either work for a tech company, hope to climb up the ranks there, and eventually influence the kind of products it makes or the ethics it conducts its business by. But another way of doing it is to learn some programming yourself, and write and release your own dream software. Yet another way is

by starting a tech blog, and sharing around ideas that may help shape the tech sphere. The difference is that first way relies on the system, and the other two ways don't. Your mileage may vary even with the two ways that don't rely on the system, but it's not like another year without a promotion can quash your spirit so easily. In this world where dreams take so long to achieve, it's really an advantage not to be subjected to barrier after barrier where you may be quashed by the system each time.

I am not saying that you should give up your dreams that are somewhat tied to the system. What I am saying is that, you may need to develop other dreams in parallel, if your primary dream is tied to the system. This way, your dreaming spirit cannot be easily quashed by some random corporate decision, perhaps caused by some random economic event. This alone will make you feel much better about yourself in the longer run, trust me.

Chapter 5

Further Ideas for Dreamers

5.1 Envisioning a Beautiful World

You just have to believe whatever vision you dream of, as long as it is good for people. Don't let the outside cynical world get you down.

Dreaming up Something Great...

To me, the opportunities for dreaming is the best thing about pop culture. This culture of dreaming has been behind some of the biggest legends in history, and has brought to the forefront some very important ideas, eg. the peace movement, equal opportunities for minorities. Without these things happening, where would we be now?

On a more personal level, dreaming means that you will never give up in getting what you want and this means you will never give up on yourself or the possibility of a beautiful life. This is important to keep brilliant minds going in times of hardship.

So I think it's important that we celebrate, and whenever possible, contribute to the culture of dreaming.

Find your own Wonderland

I believe that we should wake up every day trying to find our wonderland for that day.

First I think about what I want to do. Feeling like doing something meaningful? You can either search through the traditions and try to find something there, or try some of the new things that people are working on. More importantly, if the things they do out there aren't really right for you, then feel free to use your insight and creativity to make it better. Do believe in yourself, for you too can be a great contributor to this world!

Then I would try to get into the right mood. Working in a good environment is an important thing that can stimulate your mind, make tough work less so, and make your day brighter.

Different types of environments (or even images) you can go to to suit your mood of the day. Music is also an important tool for this exercise.

Finally I would try to find the right people. People who will be friends no matter what, people who share your interests, and people who can be physically around you so that you don't feel like a robot in a lab, in that order. The first one is probably a hard find, but is always worth trying, the second is easy with modern technology, the third isn't so hard either.

I Already Have a Lot

'The Reality' is almost always one of the things that stop us from getting what we want, isn't it? Why is that? Does it have to be this way?

We often say that we don't have this or don't have that, and this largely make up 'the reality' that we talk about so often. But does what we don't have really stop us from our goals? Often there is more than one way to achieve a goal, so while not having certain things can stop us from using one particular path, it cannot stop us from going for our goal altogether. What we need to do is to look at what we have got, how we can effectively paste together a path to get it with the resources that we have, not with the resources that we can't have.

It may not ever be a path that others have found, but that doesn't mean that it will not be

successful. Otherwise we wouldn't have pioneers!

Beautiful Things...

Making the room that you sleep in the paradise that you dream of, with items or pictures reminding you of the things that you like can really make a big difference to life. It can make you start with a better mood, give you a better day, and put more inspirations into your head.

So try it today.

5.2 Living Life to the Fullest

Wake Up to Real life!

How many people are resigned to reading about others' dreams in the paper or watching it on TV? There must be many out there, seeing the numbers excited by reality TV compared with those really trying every bit of their existence to achieve their dreams.

But we can change things. To start, start daydreaming - this thing that we were often discouraged from doing from when we were in school. Come out of feeling inferior, something that may have been instilled into you from a very young age but certainly not coming from inside you. Use flexible thinking to circumvent unhealthy hierarchies telling you that you are nothing - this is wrong because you have a brain just like the people who invented these myths. Then you will have made a good start.

Ending a Culture of Inferiority

The concept of knowing our place and not hoping for better may sound outdated enough to most of you, I think. However, it is still being hammered into us all the time. Like we are supposed to know that there are those who deserve to have much richer lives than us, or that the red carpeters are supposed to enjoy interesting lives we can never have. Well, I refuse to listen to any of this. At the end of the day I believe I can create the life I want. It is not my fault that the world is arranged in such an inequitable way, but at the same I don't have to obey this absurd order that seems to fly in the face of everyone being equal. We all have to remember this: dollars are just tokens, tools, and they are not the only tools we have to make things happen in this world. Creativity, your mind, is an even more important tool.

The Spirit of Real Life

The Spirit of Real Life is spontaneously loving, curious rather than fault finding, and free from harmful man-made rules. Discrimination and bigotry can only take us further away from looking objectively, further away from finding about the truths of this world, and further from the true spirit of real life. It takes us further from love, compassion and a better life for all, and nearer to thought of destruction, and worshiping of harmful man-made rules. Therefore it should be avoided at all costs.

5.3 You Are a Unique Voice

The Unique Voice

Most of the red-carpeters out there are so similar to each other, and (sadly) that set of things they all do becomes the hot thing of the day. It's sad because although we see so many faces, we don't get nearly as much inspiration or learn nearly as much about the world. Maybe that's because of commercialisation - everyone is instructed by their companies to do what brings in money. But in the end, it's always the unique voices that contribute, that are remembered. Think about the last few decades. How many 'original legends' can you remember, even if they were poor to begin with? And how many of those 'Copycats' do you know, even if they brought in the cash relatively quickly?

So try to be a unique voice, even though everyone is chasing the hot thing.

Inspiration to Create Something New

So many of the great additions to our world from the past few decades all actually came from simple ideas. Some people borrowed traditions from other cultures, others just believed in their little ideas that just came out of their mind. Technology itself often creates new inspiration too. But most importantly, the dreams, the ideas that we can have a better life, was what changed everything. We can all do with a bit more of those, I think.

Now do you have inspiration?

Upholding your Clan for the World to See

The first black university student. The first Aboriginal pop star. The first woman in parliament. What do they have in common? They showed us that their type is worthy of everybody's admiration too. They showed us that they can be successful without hiding or being ashamed of who they are. They showed us that what they are can even bring some advantages both to them and to the world in some situations. They were strong, have tried very hard to get there, and their success is more than just their own.

Now you too can be doing this in life. In your everyday life, besides trying your best to do whatever you are good at, don't forget the things that you are that society doesn't think is so glamorous as yet. For a start, stop being ashamed of who you are. Now, be braver and

dig up the things that you are that society seem to misunderstand. Try to think of reasons to be proud about them, and put them in your heart. When it comes to your time to cross the finishing line, you can just show everyone how proud you are. That way, your achievement won't just be your personal feat, and it will not be in vain.

The Creation of an Example

"If life gives you lemons, make lemonade," so goes the saying. But how many of us can actually do that? And why can't we do that all the time?

I think one of the main factors is that we care too much about how other people see things. For example, if you are a poor artist that can do nothing much about your life except using the cheapest materials for your work, you are quietly likely to be seen as a nobody by many people. This causes a lot of people to just give up. Worse, throughout history certain groups, like people of some ethnic backgrounds or with certain medical conditions, were discriminated against and were expected to remain within an inhumane boundary that forever limits their potential. Those who try to escape this boundary not only faced tremendous hardship, they were even told that they were delinquent

and even evil. No wonder under these myths and perceptions there were so few that could do it. Coming back to our point, if we believe it when others tell that our lives are crap and hopeless, we will act like this is the truth, and will not be able to move forward on anything. Rather, we should have a look at what we've actually got and what we can actually do about things. Maybe then, you will be able to do something brilliant.

5.4 Ways Out of Hard Places

New Paths are the Best Paths Sometimes

So you want to do something. You've found out the tried and loved path to it. But then you see too many already successful people on the path struggling to make it, and also find it hard to get an access. What do you do?

You find a new path, of course. All paths are found by people, and if the existing one is so hard to use, why not use a new one? New legends running on the express lane often use a new path, and that's the secret of their success, after all.

Picking Yourself Up Again

Feeling down and hopeless from time to time is something most of us cannot avoid. But letting this feeling stay in our system for too long will damage us, and prevent us from effectively going for our dreams. So we need to learn to pick ourselves up again.

The first thing I ask myself is, is it really that hopeless now? Isn't there just the little glimpse of hope somewhere in my vicinity that I can just pick up, and run miles ahead? Often there is. Even if there is not something that you can see, you can start using your imagination, to join up some of the dots in your life, and see if some interesting combination comes up. Often that is enough to give you some new inspiration to keep you going.

Just remember that, in life the run to victory often starts from a trough, and when you have gained enough momentum to come out of the

trough you often will already have enough momentum to cross the finishing line.

The Fine Line between Rejects and Stars

Stars and rejects share one thing: they are both different. It is not surprising that stars were often rejects before they became liked.

Therefore, every reject has to remember that, like stars, they may have a great deal to bring to the world, and what they have to do is to start believing in themselves. They also should try to connect with the outside world while remaining unique because that's the only way they may be able to bring their something new out there.

These two strategies are often what commercial people do to bring previously unspectacular things to the forefront, and maybe it is time for all of us to start harnessing them.

Start Moving Away from Hurt

How much hurt are we creating for ourselves?
You only have to watch the news to know.
Wars, terror, people making others lose, people
putting down other people are all man made.

Why isn't finding a cure to all of this at the top
of the international agenda yet? Is it too hard?
No, in fact it can begin in any individual, it's as
easy as becoming conscious not to do those
things from today.

5.5 Independence is Freedom

Think about school. There's so much name calling there that sometimes, to survive, you needed to emotionally be detached from what others say about you, at least for a while.

Now, think about the 'real world'. Doesn't the same apply? I know we need to be good citizens and etc., but why should we let THEM tell us who is a good citizen? Standing up to outside pressure and doing our own thing is just like standing up to peer pressure at school, I think.

Ever believed differently to what our politicians, our religious leaders etc. tell us to believe in? I bet you would have. Many of us feel the pressure to change our beliefs and positions, to redefine our lives in accordance with what they say. But if you look at history, contemporary wisdom isn't always wisdom after all, and especially if it interferes with the freedom and empowerment of an individual or a society.

People who successfully bring something new to the table to improve things are often those who are not afraid to believe and act outside of the contemporary mainstream. Although derided by many at the time (especially true if it involves a religious belief), the new wisdom can be just what a society needs.

So don't be afraid to be different.

But doesn't that lead us to be loners? It needn't be - you can still do all the things you like to do, and being involved in mainstream society is a must if you want to change things for more people, actually. The difference is that, we should be mindful to be *IN* the mainstream world, not *OF* the mainstream world. We can still do all the things we like to, but we do it in a way that matches our beliefs about things. We can still make friends with people who believe differently, but we make sure we are not

swayed by them. I sometimes consume popular culture that is sexist, racist or homophobic, but the fact that I am very aware of my position makes me much less susceptible to its dark side, and the fact that I am popular culture aware means that I share a world with many more people, and can inject my ideas and beliefs of freedom and empowerment into more lives.

Also from TaraElla...

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #1: A Noughties Princess Spirit Story

The early 21st century is a time of unprecedented opportunity for those coming of age. It is a time when many young adults set out to achieve their dreams, be it starting their own business, starting a political movement, or propelling themselves to superstardom. Angelle's dream is to become Cultural Royalty of Pacificland, thus achieving what her mother couldn't. Her vision is based on freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all. However, she soon finds that whilst change appears to be in the air, the resistance is often even greater. And when the forces against change mobilise, those wanting a slice of success often bow to their agenda, while those fighting for change simply give up. With her own dreams on the line, will Angelle stay true to her values? And if she does, will it be enough to make a positive difference? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?